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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Friday, July 4, 1941

Subject: "CHECK DIET BY NUTRITION YARDSTICK." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

What I have to say today concerns the yardstick for good nutrition set up recently for the whole United States. Probably you've been reading and hearing quite a bit about this yardstick lately.

As you remember, this yardstick was brought to public attention at a national nutrition conference called by the President of the United States in Washington, D.C. last month. What it really is, is a goal toward which nutritionists the country over have agreed to aim in getting a better-fed, healthier population in this country.

I've been asked a number of questions about this new yardstick--what it means --and how a homemaker can make use of it. And I'll admit that there are one or two things about this new guide that I have had questions about myself.

So just to clear up a few points--I'd like to give you the answers to a few questions about this new yardstick. These answers come from Dr. Louise Stanley, chief of the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Home Economics.

First of all, just exactly what sort of a thing is this yardstick? What does it look like?

And the answer to that is--

"The yardstick looks like a table of figures--figures that no one but a nutrition expert would understand. In this table are the recommended daily allowances for different elements that we know human beings need--protein--minerals--and the 6 best known vitamins.

"All of these allowances are expressed in scientific terms--such as grams--and milligrams--and International vitamin units. And different quantities are suggested

for men and women and for children of different ages."

And that fact right there--that this yardstick is set up in very scientific terms--brings up another big question. That is,

"How can such a hard-to-understand table be of any value to a woman who doesn't speak the language of the scientists--who doesn't know much about grams--and milligrams--and International vitamin units?"

And here's Doctor Stanley's very practical answer to that question. She says--

"The persons who set up the yardstick never intended that homemakers would use the yardstick in its original form. They expect the yardstick to be translated into terms of common foods by nutritionists in every community in every State. The yardstick can be used as the basis for many kinds of diets.

"Already nutrition leaders are at work translating this yardstick into diets that are adequate. They are suggesting foods that will provide the allowances set up in the yardstick. And they are suggesting foods that are available in each of their particular localities, in every season of the year, and at different cost levels."

According to Doctor Louise Stanley, the Bureau of Home Economics has translated this yardstick in terms of food groups. That is, they have set up a master diet plan showing the different food groups that need to be included every day. Then the homemaker, using her own judgment, can make choices within each of these food groups--choices that fit her purse and meet her personal preferences.

For instance, one of the food groups in this main diet plan is made up of TOMATOES, ORANGES, GRAPEFRUIT, GREEN CABBAGE, AND RA/ SALAD GREENS. Every person in the family needs 1 or more servings a day of these. But just which ones they will be, it is up to the homemaker to decide.

I won't try to give you the whole master diet plan worked out by the home economists of the Department of Agriculture. But just let me name the main food groups they list as everyday diet needs.

1. The first part of the report is devoted to a general

description of the situation in the country at the end of 1937.

2. The second part of the report is devoted to a detailed

analysis of the economic situation in the country.

3. The third part of the report is devoted to a detailed

analysis of the political situation in the country.

4. The fourth part of the report is devoted to a detailed

analysis of the social situation in the country.

5. The fifth part of the report is devoted to a detailed

analysis of the cultural situation in the country.

6. The sixth part of the report is devoted to a detailed

analysis of the foreign relations of the country.

7. The seventh part of the report is devoted to a detailed

analysis of the military situation in the country.

8. The eighth part of the report is devoted to a detailed

analysis of the economic situation in the country.

9. The ninth part of the report is devoted to a detailed

analysis of the political situation in the country.

10. The tenth part of the report is devoted to a detailed

analysis of the social situation in the country.

11. The eleventh part of the report is devoted to a detailed

analysis of the cultural situation in the country.

12. The twelfth part of the report is devoted to a detailed

analysis of the foreign relations of the country.

13. The thirteenth part of the report is devoted to a detailed

analysis of the military situation in the country.

14. The fourteenth part of the report is devoted to a detailed

First--there is the group of milk and milk products. Another groups is made up of leafy, green, or yellow vegetables. Eggs are another. Lean meat, poultry, and fish make up another important food group. Still another is called "cereals and bread." And fats, sweets, and water finish up the list.

Some of these food groups furnish the protein the yardstick calls for. Some of them furnish one or more of the vitamins. Some take care of the daily need for minerals such as calcium and iron.

But you won't have to think of each of these food values separately if you follow the whole diet pattern. For the Department of Agriculture home economists say--"If you follow the pattern, the vitamins and minerals and other food essentials will take care of themselves."

Now I have time for just one more question--and a pertinent question, too. That is, "on what is this goal for good nutrition based?"

And here's the answer--from the nutritionists who set up the yardstick.

"It is based on scientific data--on all the facts that careful research has shown us up to now of what foods human beings need--and how much of it they need. Naturally, some of the figures in the yardstick will be revised later as further information becomes available."

And those are all the questions on the nutrition yardstick I have time for today. If you would like a copy of that master diet plan suggested by the home economists of the Department of Agriculture, you can get it free by writing to the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Simply ask for their leaflet called "Eat the Right Food to Help Keep You Fit."

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